

## The Plunger

By Grace Downey Tinkham



"MONEY!" HE GASPED. "WHOSE?"

*Drawing by A. C. Stidsen*

"I'M sorry, sir. Terribly sorry. But it's all off—our bargain. I can't purchase that property, even at the low price you set. I—I haven't the money for the first payment."

"But, Larry—" Colonel Pepperpod stopped, considered. He leaned far forward in his office chair, and over his desk-top bent a puzzling look upon young Larry Hoff standing on the other side, nervously twisting his cap and biting unsteady lips. "I don't quite understand," he went on kindly. "You've been saving and careful; and that bank balance you showed me last week—"

"Has to go to settle an account," completed Larry. Suddenly he took a step nearer and said with intense earnestness: "Colonel, I'm awfully sorry, and more disappointed than you could guess! It was one chance in a lifetime you were

giving me—and I've got to turn it down!" He paused; straightened: "Cliff Williams would grab at that opportunity in a minute! Cliff is wild to get that property, sir!"

"Cliff has his parents and well-to-do brothers and sisters," returned the colonel. "Cliff hasn't had to struggle—I'd like you to have it, Larry."

"But I can't, sir! I can't!" And Larry turned and made stumbingly from the room, leaving the good colonel staring after him, perplexed and amazed.

"Something's wrong here," said he finally. "Larry had a bank balance ten days ago of seventy-five dollars. Now it has to go to settle an account. H'm. Wonder what account? There's been no sickness, nothing unusual. Strange! And not like Larry. He keeps his head—he's not a plunger. What then could have

happened to it?"

It was only that morning that Larry himself had found out. The discovery came in the form of a thin business envelope handed him by the postman, as he left the little house, where he and his sister Marion lived, to go to work. The letter came from Dutton's large department store, and it held one sheet of paper upon which was typed a list that made Larry stare and blink and stare again.

"One pair of shoes, eleven dollars," he read. "One hat, ten dollars; two pairs of silk hose, five dollars; dress, thirty-seven; beads, six; and bracelets, five of them, six dollars. Total seventy-five dollars!"

Larry gasped, read it again, and went hot and cold. He swung round to re-enter the house, intending to have Marion explain. But there wasn't time; there was his work.

All morning, however, that letter haunted him. Time and again he drew it forth and examined it. Once he tried to believe it wasn't his. He knew better. The name was correct. And he had opened the account with Dutton's three weeks before, soon after Marion returned from her summer vacation with Aunt Sue Harper on the island. He had given her permission to use it when she needed clothes. She had—with telling effect!

At noon he went to the colonel's office and gave up his chance to the splendid big lot the colonel had offered him. It was all he could do; he was strapped.

"Now Cliff will nab it," he decided dimly, as he dragged back to his place of employment. "Colonel Pepperpod wants to sell. And why not to Cliff who will pay spot cash? Maybe Cliff won't brag and strut! Well, he'll have something to do it about—I won't! Oh, how could Marion be so extravagant?" he ended, beside himself. "How could she be such a spendthrift—such a selfish, thoughtless, little plunger?"

When Larry reached home that evening he felt sincere relief that Marion was not there. He didn't want to meet her with anger; he wanted to be calm and cool, not all shaky inside, hopeless and enraged. He'd keep his temper; he'd be self-controlled. But, the second Marion stepped inside the door, Larry's poise fled. Her appearance did it, for there she stood, from tip to toe, arrayed like a fashion plate in the new finery.

"Are those the clothes you bought?" he demanded of her, although he knew.



"Charged at Dutton's?"

"Why, yes." Her pretty eyes widened. "You said I might charge whatever I wanted, Larry."

Larry gave a growl. "I said needed—not wanted!" he corrected. "I hoped you had some judgment!"

"I have." Marion bobbed her fair head elatedly, and whirled on her dainty toes. "Doesn't it show in my choice of this dress? Look at it! Hasn't it wonderful style? Isn't it smart and chic? And only thirty-seven dollars! It's a bargain, Larry."

"It's a freak!" shot back Larry. "And that hat too!"

His eyes had swept from the uneven flouncing on the Pekin blue crepe dress to the broad-brimmed hat with its huge black feather drooping from the brim.

"Hmph! Plenty of it!" he sneered.

"Oh, Larry!" Marion protested, paling a little. But Larry would not hear.

"Those silk stockings with the funny open-work up the sides and those shoes that look as if they'd go to pulp the first time you stepped on a damp sidewalk—all part of the regalia, I understand. Also those giddy beads and the pink, blue, gold, green, and purple bracelets, that clatter like kitchen utensils!"

"But they're all the rage, Larry." Her voice was little and weak.

"The rage! I believe it! They make a fellow rage to look at them and listen to them!" he scathingly agreed. Paused, added: "That whole outfit is wretched taste; you look like a gypsy! But what's the use! You don't think or care. You don't pull with me. You pull against. You're a plunger, that's what. A plunger!"

She gave a low hurt cry and pressed back against the wall. Larry was racing on:

"Seventy-five dollars worth of junk—just junk! Not one sensible article purchased; not one durable. And for it I have to give up buying the colonel's lot on Twilliger Hill—give it up to pay for that!"

Marion caught her breath. What! That lot which Larry had longed to own; had saved and saved for? And she had forgotten—forgotten!

"Ever since you and I have been alone," he was saying wearily, "you have never had the right slant on the situation. It never occurred to you that you should be thrifty and careful. Even before you went to Aunt Sue's, you squandered every penny I gave you on useless stuff, and lots of it. Fluffy-ruffles would get you every time! I tried to talk, tell you. But you wouldn't listen. So I hoped Aunt Sue with her strict economy would work an influence for good, and that you'd return different. That's why I opened the account, I felt so sure you had changed, and on your sixteenth birthday gave you the right to use it." He stopped, drew an unsteady hand across his eyes, and finished: "Well, it serves me right. That bill knocked me cold! But I see now,

Marion, that you can't be trusted. You're too much of a plunger!"

And with that he snatched up his cap and rushed from the house.

Marion stood cold and still for many minutes after he had gone. Then slowly she made her way to her bedroom and to her mirror. Intently, she peered at the reflection.

"Wretched taste!" she repeated Larry. "Gypsy! Yes, I do! It's gaudy and silly! All of it!" And with a swift, impatient movement she snatched off the broad hat and tossed it on the bed, stripped the bracelets from her wrists and the beads from her neck and threw them beside it. Followed the dress, the delicate shoes and hose. Twenty minutes later, she was in a simple, straight-line navy twill with dainty organdy collar and cuffs she had made herself, black shoes and stockings of sturdy quality, a trim sports hat, and was on her way out the front door.

"Now if I can only find something," she yearned. "Something!"

That her quest proved successful, showed in her face an hour later when she returned. The shame and misery that had sprung there under the lash of Larry's words, had given place to a look of hope and faith and quiet determination.

"Oh, I'm so glad! Glad!" she murmured, hurrying to her room and getting her little date book. "Mrs. Price will let me come Tuesday to look after Alice while she's at her club. Wednesday, Mrs. Lucas is giving a tea and engaged me to help her serve. Dear Granny Mills said she would gladly pay a dollar any afternoon I cared to come and read to her; she chose Thursday. Harriet Norton will be away from home Friday and was anxious about leaving Jack and June. I'm to look after them. Besides, Aunt Plumey, the colonel's sister, liked my organdy collar and cuff set and ordered all I could make for the church sale. So there is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday already taken. The rest of the time can be put on the sets. Earning!" she cried softly with a choke in her voice. "Earning—instead of spending. . . . Oh, I refuse to be what Larry said I was," she declared with a sob. "I'll not be a plunger! And I'll prove it to him!"

A month later Marion did. It came about the last evening of the month, when she had carried the roomy chamois bag in which she had stored her earnings to the living-room table, and counted it. On the other side of the large shaded lamp, Larry deep in his newspaper failed to notice the neat tiers of silver being built on the opposite side. He glanced up casually when she called him; then craned and stared.

"Money!" he gasped. "Whose?"

"Mine. I earned it," replied Marion. "It's twenty-five dollars. Oh, isn't that enough to make a first payment on the property?" she anxiously asked. "If—if

it isn't sold."

"It isn't sold," he told her. "Saw the colonel on my way home less than an hour ago; he said he was still holding it for me. And that's enough to secure it. Oh, Boy! This is great!" he broke off with a whoop. "Twenty-five dollars! The lot is ours! But how did you do it?" he questioned, sobering.

Quietly she related her experiences of the past month,—the numerous babies she had cared for, the hundreds of dishes she had washed, the many folks she had read to, the fifteen collar-and-cuff sets she had made and, when she was through, Larry leaned over and took her hands and held them tight.

"Partner!" he said, his voice ringing with profound joy. "My little partner!"

Marion's heart gave a mighty leap. Partner! That was the most wonderful word in the world!

"Yes, let it be partner, Larry," she returned, happy and eager. "Not plunger—ever!"

"I should think not, after this," Larry agreed promptly. "Plunger—we'll wipe that out; forget about it. My safe and steady stand-by! My partner from now on, who pulls with me always! Never against! My partner!"

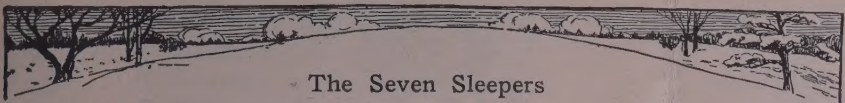
### A Notable Unitarian Woman

ON June 15, 1923, President Harding, acting in behalf of the Roosevelt Memorial Association, presented gold medals "for services to the people," to Miss Louisa E. Schuyler, Prof. Henry Fairfield Osborn, and Major-General Leonard Wood. The ceremony took place in the East Room of the White House. Miss Schuyler is a Unitarian. A sister of Theodore Roosevelt, Mrs. Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, wrote to the new York Times concerning Miss Schuyler's achievements as follows:

"The wonderful improvement in the poorhouses and the hospitals during the last half-century, the unprecedented success in the prevention among little children of unnecessary blindness, and the alleviating work of the Sanitary Commission, are all due in large part to the intelligence and executive ability of this remarkable woman. Age cannot wither her! At eighty-six, suffering from an illness which renders her active body helpless, her splendid brain still throbs with civic and national patriotism, and wherever she sees her duty that brain and will are as ready to give their energy as in the days of her youth, when with a devoted band of other young, far-seeing citizens she took steps for the betterment of her city and therefore of her country. Surely a medal given to this friend of Theodore Roosevelt's father, and this friend of Theodore Roosevelt himself, to this unique embodiment of what we mean by 'public duty' could not be more worthily awarded."

It will interest our readers to know that Miss Schuyler has recently become a subscriber to *The Beacon*.





## The Seven Sleepers

BY SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

"SAFE from sorrow and sin and death," read Mother as she finished the legend of the Saints at Ephesus, "the Seven sleep sweet in that cave until Christ cometh again."

The Band was spending two winter days and nights at the Cabin.

"I wisht, I wisht", said Alice-Palace at last, "that I could see the nice dear Sleepers."

"Well," said the Captain from the depths of a monstrous rocking-chair, "there are seven other sleepers who live not far from this Cabin, but they aren't saints by any means. Some are gentle and some are fierce."

"Tell us," chorused the Band from in front of the fire that roared in the great arched fire-place.

"The first one," said the Captain, "is big and black and dangerous."

"Bumbly-bee!" shouted Alice-Palace. "That's big and black an' very dangerous," she explained, "cause once I caught one an' he hurt me norful."

"No," said the Captain, "this is a big, black, growly animal who wears an overcoat of four inches of fur and an under-coat of four inches of fat. He isn't afraid of the cold, but he finds that rent is cheaper than board. So he sleeps all winter instead of eating."

"Bear," shouted all but one of the Band.

"Bumbly-bee," piped Alice-Palace, who was never known to change an opinion.

"Once," said the Captain, "I knew two boys—one was twelve and the other was ten years old. They went off hunting up in Maine in March. One had a muzzle-loading shotgun and the other had a long stick. They found a little hole in a bank," he went on, "and the boy with the stick poked. He felt something soft, so he kept on poking."

"I think there's something here," said he. There was. All of a sudden the whole bank caved in and out rushed a big, black, cross bear. You see," explained the Captain, "they had poked right into the air-hole of a bear-den. The snow was so deep that they couldn't run, and the bear could climb a tree much faster than they could. So what do you suppose they did."

"I guess," remarked Alice resentfully, "that they wisht it had been a bumbly-bee."

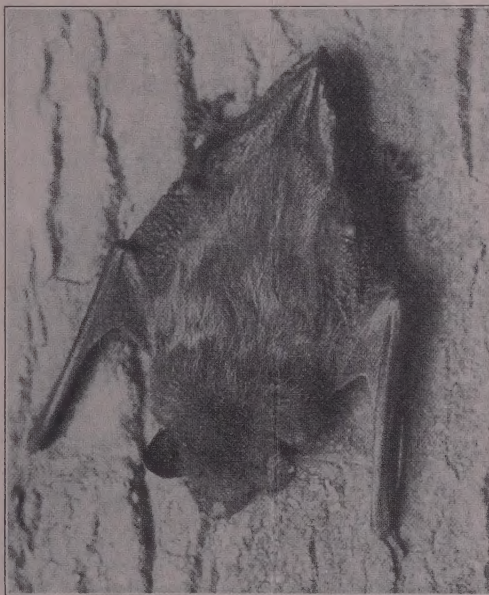
"Go on!" shouted the rest with one accord.

"The little chap with the stick", continued the Captain, "got behind the big one with the gun, who was shaking like anything. 'Don't you miss,' he said, 'Cause this stick isn't very sharp.' 'All right,"

said the big boy, and he waited until he saw the white spot that showed under the bear's chin when it reared up on its hind legs not six feet away. The shot crashed right through the bear's throat, and he fell dead so close to their feet that the hot blood stained the shoes of the boy in front. They got ten dollars for the skin, and ten dollars bounty, and about three million dollars of glory."

"Tell some more," chorused the Band when he stopped for breath.

"Well," meditated the Captain, "there was my great, great Uncle Jake who fought in the Revolution and was a famous bear-hunter. One day during a



A SLEEPING BAT

*Courtesy of Nature Magazine,  
Washington, D. C.*

January thaw he was coming down Pond Hill when he stepped into a mushy place back of a patch of bushes and sank in up to his waist. He felt something soft under his feet, and he stamped on it. The next second," said the Captain impressively, "he wished he hadn't for a big animal rose right up under him, and the next thing poor Uncle Jake knew he was astride a bear going down hill like mad, riding bear-back as it were."

Mother gave a deep groan and buried her face in her hands; but the rest of the Band were too young to be affected by the pun.

"He didn't want to stay on, and he didn't dare to get off," resumed the Captain hurriedly, "so he drew his hunting knife and waited until the old bear reached level ground and just stabbed him dead right through his neck."

"Tell us about some more," urged Trot-

tie when the Captain stopped again.

"Some of the gently ones," suggested Henny-Penny, beginning to look around anxiously at the dark corners.

"Well," said the Captain, "there's a gray, greedy one who goes to bed early, just a loose fag of fat. That's the wood-chuck. Then there's a nice striped one with pockets in his cheeks, who always takes a quart or so of nuts and seeds to bed with him in case he gets hungry in the night. That's the chipmunk."

"Nice dear Chippy Nipmunk," explained Alice-Palace to the Third.

"Then comes a chap with a funny face and a ringed tail and whose hindpaws make a track like a baby's foot. That's the raccoon. The next one is pretty dangerous," continued the Captain. "He is black and white and has a long bushy tail. He won't turn out of his way for anybody, but he'll always give any one that comes up to him three signals before he defends himself. First," said the Captain, "he'll stamp his forefeet. Second, he'll raise his long bushy tail. If you still keep on coming he gives his third and last signal. He waves the end of his tail back and forth. If you stand still," finished the Captain impressively, "or move backward, you are safe even then, but if you take one step forward—you'll have to buy a new suit of clothes."

"I know," remarked the Third wisely, "Bill Darby and I caught one in a trap once. He said it was an albino wood chuck. But it was a skunk—an' we had to live in our bathing suits for nearly a week."

"The next sleeper," said the Captain, "has wings."

"A bumbly-bee," tried Alice again.

"No," returned the Captain patiently, "this is an animal with a very ugly face and leathery brown wings with hooks on the top. When it goes to sleep for the winter it catches these little hooks on a rafter or beam in some dark corner of a building or steeple. Then it turns and hangs by the long curved nails of its hind feet and goes to sleep upside down. It makes a very high squeak when it flies, and sometimes it comes into houses hunting mosquitoes. It never does any harm, and it does a great deal of good; but silly people," went on the Captain severely, looking straight at Trottie, "sometimes kill them with tennis rackets."

"I won't kill any more bats," murmured Trottie penitently.

"Last of all," resumed the Captain, "is the dear little jumping-mouse. He has big eyes and floppy ears and a long, long tail. If you boys could jump as far in proportion to your height as Mr. Jumping-Mouse does, you would clear two hundred and forty feet every time you jumped. Before the frost comes he makes a round warm nest of leaves and soft grass, far underground. There he rolls





## THE BEACON CLUB

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of The Beacon Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

R. F. D. No. 34,  
BROOKFIELD, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck:—I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club. I am fifteen years old and I go to the Unitarian Sunday school in Brookfield. We are a large class of girls and our teacher is Mrs. Hastings whom we all love. We consider our Sunday school an exception as they send an auto every Sunday for the out-district children who no other wise could attend. Do you not call that good work? I do as I am one of them.

Yours truly,  
CARRIE GREGSON.

GRASS RANGE, MONTANA.

Dear Miss Buck:—I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club so I decided to write you a letter.

himself into a round ball and sleeps until Spring."

"I like the cuddly jumpy-mouse the best," said Alice-Palace sleepily.

Then Mother announced that it was bedtime for seven other sleepers.

"Just one minute," said the Captain. "I want to read the Band a very, very beautiful poem which has the names of the seven animals that sleep all winter, so that the Band can remember them. I know it's a beautiful poem," he finished modestly, "because I wrote it myself.

"Here is the poem:

"The Bat and the Bear they never care  
What winter winds may blow,  
The Jumping-Mouse in his cosy house  
Is safe from ice and snow.  
The Chipmunk and the Woodchuck,  
The Skunk who's slow but sure,  
The ringed Raccoon, who hates the moon,  
Have found for cold the cure."

### Church School News

The church school at Barre, Mass., under the direction of Mrs. Herbert Rice, assisted by the Rev. Lyman Greenman and others, gave the Christmas pageant, "The Light of the World," on Dec. 23rd. The leaders feel that the children were more than interested, they were impressed and instructed. Mr. Greenman has formed a Y. P. R. U. and has arranged some very interesting evenings for the young people. His church-school class of boys is studying "The Bible and the Bible Country" under his leadership. Mr. Greenman is using with this course of study the pictures he brought with him from the Holy Land.

At Cleveland, Ohio, the supper and Christmas party for the children was given on December 27th. They were invited to come at five o'clock for games and to meet Santa Claus. Supper followed at six and afterward the church school gave a Christmas masque, "Holy Night."

My grandmother sends me *The Beacon* and I am very much interested. We have no Unitarian church but I go to the Methodist Sunday school. Our minister's name is Mr. Resor and our Sunday-school teacher's name is Miss Helen Spierson. I am ten years old and am in the Fifth Grade. I would like to have some girl write to me.

Yours truly,

HELEN KOETITZ.

418 SUMMER ST.,  
BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck:—My brother and I go to the Unitarian Church here and so get *The Beacon* every Sunday. We should both like to join the Beacon Club and wear its button. My brother is eight years old and a great reader; he reads every book he can get hold of. His name is Richard. I am sixteen, the only girl of six children, and I sure get lonesome sometimes. I should like to have some of the girls of my own age write to me; they will be sure to get an answer. I am secretary of our Sunday School and like it very much.

Wishing you success with your club, I will close.

Most sincerely yours,

CHARLOTTE BENTON.

The dramatic work for this masque was done under the direction of Mr. Lowehas. At the church school service on Sunday, December 23d, the collection for the Near East Relief was taken and that and the amount collected by the carollers for the same purpose resulted in a total of nearly \$50 for that fund. Each class in the school furnished a basket for the Christmas dinner of a family, with the result that the school provided dinner and gifts for a hundred people.

In the account of the Christmas pageant given in the Indianapolis Unitarian Bulletin, the names of fourteen adults, and two young people from the Channing Club, are given as taking part in the preparation of the pageant and arrangements for its presentation. With so many people taking an active interest and sharing in the work of producing scenes from the nativity for the Christmas service, it is no wonder that an audience that filled every seat in the church witnessed with delight the excellent presentation.

From Wollaston, Mass., comes a record of church school statistics which is very interesting and creditable to the school. For six weeks, November 1st to December 15th, the junior department of the church school had the highest percentage of attendance, 88%. The kindergarten was next with 73%, the junior church (young people) 71%, and the primary department 66%. This makes an average of 77% for the entire school. In addition, eight classes are named which have had 100% attendance, one of these classes having kept up that record for eight successive Sundays. The names of pupils having perfect attendance for that period are printed in one calendar and in a succeeding issue names of those who have been absent only once during the three months of the autumn session of the school.

## RECREATION CORNER.

### ENIGMA XLII.

I am composed of 13 letters.  
My 3, 6, 4, 13, is a saucer-shaped bell.  
My 1, 9, 10, 2, 12, 13, is one of the seasons.  
My 7, 11, 12, 5, are parts of a fish.  
My 8, 6, 4, is one of a family.  
My whole are all about us now.

E. J. W.

### ENIGMA XLIII.

I am composed of 20 letters.  
My 3, 4, 6, 20, is a flower.  
My 8, 2, 10, 5, 12, is an illness.  
My 19, 18, 17, 11, is a tool.  
My 1, 15, 16, is food for horses.  
My 14, 7, 12, 13, is a kind of boat.  
My 6, 9, 11, is a large body of water.  
My whole is the name of a book for boys and girls.

J. W. P.

### CHARADE

My first's an edible legume,  
Which in many a garden grows.  
My second is both round and smooth,  
And helps a door to close.  
My third across the ocean lives,  
In the land of mists and heather;  
A sturdy outdoor worker he,  
No matter what's the weather.  
My whole's a "down East" Indian tribe,  
A river and a bay.  
Search well along New England's coast—  
Your search will surely pay.

E. O. S.

### AN ANAGRAM PUZZLE

With eager — the baby — into her arms:  
No flower on earth but — beside his infant charms,

He pulls a pansy's — and holds it to her eyes;  
His laugh — out, a little —, then fast asleep he lies.

A single word of five letters and five other words made by rearranging the letters of the first word are used to fill the six blank spaces.

YOUTH'S COMPANION.

### ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 20.

ENIGMA XXXVII.—"I am nothing but truth is everything."

ENIGMA XXXIX.—America the beautiful.

WORD SQUARE.—REAL  
ERIE  
AIDS  
LESS

DOUBLE HEADINGS.—1. Stall, tall, all. 2. Stripe, tripe, ripe. 3. Stroll, troll, roll. 4. Stone, tone, one. 5. Trill, rill, ill.

RIDDLE.—Ghost, host.

The Recreation Corner is very much in need of contributions to its column. Will not some of our boys and girls send in enigmas and other puzzles which they would like to have printed and which will give enjoyment to others? Perhaps some of our local Beacon Clubs may like to devote a meeting to the making of puzzles for this column. The Editor would be most grateful for such assistance.

## THE BEACON

REV. FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR.

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